Continuous Improvement in Ottawa County, Michigan
A High Performance Court Framework Perspective

Brian Ostrom, PhD
Sandi Metcalf, MS
Kevin J. Bowling, JD

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Presentation Outline

• Rationale and history of strategic planning in Ottawa County, Michigan
• High Performance Court assessment and relationship to strategic focus areas
• Examples of projects undertaken/completed
• Transition to new Strategic Plan in 2015
• Lessons Learned
The Context

Ottawa County
Pop. Approx 270K
6 Cities
1 Village
17 Townships
565 Square Miles
8th largest of 83 Counties

20th Circuit Court
Probate Court
58th District Court
Developing the Long Range Strategic Plan

• Phase 1
  – Forming the Task Force
  – Designing a Process and Schedule

• Phase 2
  – Gathering Input from Stakeholders

• Phase 3
  – Developing the Strategic Plan
The Core of the Strategic Plan

- **Mission** - To administer justice and restore wholeness in a manner that inspires public trust
- **Vision** – As a leader among Courts, we exemplify high standards for justice and public service
- **Values** – “COURTS” – Collaboration, Operational excellence, Understanding, Responsiveness, Transparency, Service
Implementing the Strategic Plan

- Development of Strategic Focus Areas
- SP Action Teams
  - Team #1 – Resources
  - Team #2 – Access To Courts
  - Team #3 – Efficient/Effective Services and Operations
  - Team #4 – Positive External Relations
  - Team #5 – Employee Opportunities and Satisfaction
Institutionalizing Strategic Thinking and Strategic Leadership

- Based on NACM Core Competencies
- Use of a Strategic Planning Oversight Team (SPOT)
- SP as standard agenda item for Leadership Team
- Periodic judicial briefings to keep judges aware and supportive of SP activities
- Development of a communications plan
Benefits Gained From SP Process

• Fostered long term and courtwide thinking and planning
• Enhanced courtwide communication and collaboration
• Involved and engaged staff in ongoing improvement efforts
• Provided court leadership with a strategic roadmap outlining priorities
Benefits Gained From SP Process

• Provided a tool to communicate priorities and resource needs
• Increased accountability by using the Plan as a tool to assess progress and accomplishments
• Demonstrated how the SP process can help achieve goals while reasonably managing existing court caseloads and workloads
• For Summary of Team Accomplishments – See SP, Appendix A
HPCF – A Natural Progression

• Following several years of success with the SP, the Leadership Team was prepared to “raise the bar.”

• SJI grant funding provided an opportunity to partner with NCSC

• The HPCF was anticipated to help with a renewed focus on performance measures at the state and local level
HPCF

What Does It Give You?

• Comprehensive Management Approach

• Move from Performance Measures to Performance Management

• A way to Diagnose and Solve your Problems
Customer and Internal Operating Perspectives

HPC Measurement: A Balanced Scorecard

**Effectiveness**
Gauges the match between stated goals and their achievement.

- CourTools and Other Measures:
  - Measure 5: Trial Date Certainty
  - Measure 7: Enforcement of Penalties
  - Measure 8: Juror Usage

**Procedural Satisfaction**
Gauges if customers perceive the court is providing fair and accessible service.

- CourTools and Other Measures:
  - Measure 1: Access
  - Measure 1: Fairness
  - Transaction time

**Efficiency**
Gauges the variability and stability in key processes.

- CourTools and Other Measures:
  - Measure 2: Clearance Rate
  - Measure 4: Age of Pending Caseload
  - Measure 6: Case File Integrity

**Productivity**
Gauges whether processes make the best use of judge and staff time.

- CourTools and Other Measures:
  - Measure 10: Cost Per Case
  - Measure 3: Time to Disposition
  - Workload Assessment
Making the Most of Available Resources

**HPC Management: The Four Capitals**

**Organizational Capital**
Organizing judges and staff to achieve the best use of time in pursuing common goals and communicating those goals clearly to justice system partners.

**Technological Capital**
Using technology to achieve greater efficiency and quality, while managing it competently. Implementing up-to-date technology in an integrated way is key to effectively managing court business processes.

**Human Capital**
Promoting the sharing of information and ideas on performance strategies, targets, and results. Input and feedback are solicited by court leaders from all personnel.

**Information Capital**
Pursuing a credible evidence-based system to evaluate court performance. Ongoing attention to measurement and analysis help to ensure data are valid and meaningful.

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**HPC Management: Strengthening the Role of Courts in Society**

**Public Trust and Confidence**
Public support is recognized as critical for legitimacy and compliance with decisions. As a result, a court will seek to demonstrate and communicate a record of successful job performance.

**Support of Legitimizing Authorities**
Adequate funding from other branches of government is sought on the basis of measurable court performance, especially the efficient use of public resources.
Diagnosis and Problem Solving

• The HPCF Quality Cycle

- Identify the Problem: Clearly state problem to be solved. Perception that family law cases are taking too long and backlog is growing.
- Collect the Data: Gather data to define gap between desired and actual performance. Family court customer opinion is sought and case processing data compiled.
- Analyze the Data: Data is examined and interpreted to further clarify the problem. In the family division, results show time to disposition is up and customer satisfaction is down.
- Take Corrective Action: In-depth knowledge of the problem helps choose best course of action.
  - Re-design family law pro se process
  - Develop and improve staff training
  - Collaborate with stakeholders such as the family law bar
- Evaluate the Results: With new information, business processes can be further refined. Continue monitoring relevant family law performance indicators.
- Continue Cycle of Corrective Action: Ensure issues get on family law judges’ agenda; add family law coordinator; initiate family law clinic.


Self-Assessment Survey

1. Individuals can find information about the court’s location, hours and parking options on the court’s website.
2. Our court tracks whether criminal offenders are in compliance with court orders.
3. Active case files can be easily located within 15 minutes.
4. All judges hearing civil cases consider and rule on contested motions in a timely manner.
5. Court leaders clearly articulate the values relevant to quality court administrative practices and ongoing improvement.
6. Staff are encouraged to look for ways to improve processes and procedures.
7. Judges are actively involved in determining which performance measures are important, needed, and useful.
8. In our court, the business needs articulated by judges, managers, and staff drive the acquisition and use of technology.
9. Our court responds promptly to requests for information from court users.
Examples of Questions

• *Procedural Satisfaction*
  Users of our court believe that the time spent waiting to conduct their business was reasonable.

• *Effectiveness*
  When called to the courthouse for jury service, at least 75% of citizens will be sent to a courtroom for jury selection.
Examples of Questions

- **Efficiency**
  Active case files can be easily located within 15 minutes.

- **Productivity**
  Our court knows what its costs are for each major case type.

- **Organizational Capital**
  Making time to discuss the results of performance measurement is a regular item on the agenda of judges’ meetings.
Examples of Questions

• **Human Capital**
  Staff are encouraged to look for ways to improve processes and procedures

• **Information Capital**
  Judges have confidence in the accuracy and reliability of court data.
Examples of Questions

• **Technology Capital**
  The business needs articulated by judges, managers, and staff drive the acquisition and use of technology.

• **Public Trust and Confidence**
  Information on court procedures is available to the public, written in a way they can easily understand.
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – balanced scorecard

**Effectiveness**
- Gauges the match between stated goals and their achievement.
  - **CourTools and Other Measures:**
    - Measure 5: Trial Date Certainty
    - Measure 7: Enforcement of Penalties
    - Measure 8: Juror Usage

**Efficiency**
- Efficient and Effective Services
  - Measure 2: Clearance Rate
  - Measure 4: Age of Pending Caseload
  - Measure 6: Case File Integrity

**Resources**

**Procedural Satisfaction**
- Access to Courts
  - Measure 1: Access
- Efficient and Effective Services
  - Measure 1: Fairness
  - Transaction time

**Productivity**
- Resources
  - Measure 10: Cost Per Case
  - Measure 3: Time to Disposition
  - Workload Assessment
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – balanced scorecard
Strategic Issue Team #5

Goal 1: Continually improve work environment
1.1 open communication
1.2 respect and teamwork
1.3 leadership and management skills
1.4 value and recognize staff
1.5 improve work space/equipment

Goal 2: Maintain a highly skilled and engaged workforce
2.1 educate and train judges/staff
2.2 addl training for high performers
2.3 ensure certifications complete
2.4 cross train
2.5 involve staff in improvement efforts
Strategic Issue Team #5 – Employee Satisfaction Survey (2007-present)

“Communication, training, performance evaluation and staff/support/recognition are key areas that consistently received lower ratings on all four version of the survey.”

2013 Recommendations:

1) Normative culture enhancement – courtwide initiative to develop and maintain a healthy culture and workforce emphasizing good customer service and employee satisfaction in the work place.

2) Communication and supervisory feedback – regular staff/team meetings in each division; all staff meeting in Jan; annual performance evaluations

3) Training – develop standardized, electronic training materials; send front line staff to trainings outside of the Court/County
Strategic Issue Team #5 –
Employee Satisfaction Survey 2007 vs. 2013

1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree
Q19: On my job, I know exactly what is expected of me
Strategic Issue Team #5 – Employee Satisfaction Survey 2007 vs. 2013
Employee Satisfaction Survey Comparison

Ottawa 2013 survey comparison with seven select courts from CA, GA, MI, OH
Employee Satisfaction Survey Comparison

Q22: I get the training I need to do the job well

Ottawa 2013 survey comparison with seven select courts from CA, GA, MI, OH
We Need to Keep the Performance Measure Dashboards as Simple as Possible
## Ottawa County, MI

### Performance Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Trial Division</th>
<th>Friend of the Court</th>
<th>Family Division/Juvenile Services</th>
<th>Child Care Fund</th>
<th>Probate</th>
<th>District Court</th>
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<td>Measure 3: Time to Disposition</td>
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<td>Measure 4: Age of Active Pending Caseload</td>
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<td>Measure 5: Trial Date Certainty</td>
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<td>Measure 6: Reliability and Integrity of Case Files</td>
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<td>Measure 7: Collection of Monetary Penalties</td>
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Ottawa County Courts

Performance Measures Dashboard

Why Measure Performance?

The court is an eventful place where many different types of cases, in all stages of the legal process, compete for the time and attention of judges and staff. It is the responsibility of judges and court staff to ensure the needs and expectations of those who must access the court are met while maintaining efficient and effective internal operations. Due to the demands of the court environment; however, few opportunities exist for judges and court administrators to view their work in perspective.

Performance measurement allows court managers to better understand and manage organizational performance while gauging how well the court is achieving its most basic goals. While embarking on the journey of becoming a high performance court can be challenging for judges and court managers, the benefits far exceed the time and cost required. The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) offers five compelling reasons why courts should engage in this process:

1. Perceptions and beliefs held by court staff and the public about how work is getting done are not always accurate.
   * Performance data allow everyone to test the reality of their assumptions about how well things are going.

2. Court staff and court users may have different criteria in mind when they evaluate the quality of service.
   * Performance data allow the courts to avoid the problem of making incorrect assumptions about what will best satisfy the public.

3. Standardized goals and priorities allow staff to creatively achieve desired outcomes.
   * Focusing on performance data in terms of clear measures empowers court staff to creatively reach those goals.

4. Allocating the appropriate amount of time, resources and money to court activities is important.
   * Performance measures provide essential indicators of whether goals are being reasonably achieved and which areas are
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – Balanced scorecard

Effectiveness - Collections

Procedural Satisfaction - Access/Fairness

Efficiency - Clearance Rates

Productivity - Employee Satisfaction
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – Effectiveness
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – Procedural Satisfaction

Procedural Access

Overall Response

Questions

Q1 - Finding the courthouse was easy
Q2 - Forms clear and easy to understand
Q3 - Felt safe in courthouse
Q4 - Court makes reasonable effort to remove barriers

Overall Response

85
A High Performance Court Framework: HPC Measurement – Productivity
Transition to an Updated Strategic Plan

- 2014 – SP Taskforce works with Consultant
- Review of Mission, Vision, Values
- Thorough review of external and internal trends, opportunities, and threats
- Survey of stakeholders to determine needs
- Analysis and revision of strategic focus areas, goals, objectives and priority projects
- 2015 – Rollout of SP to all Judges and Court Staff
Revised Strategic Focus Areas

1. Resources/Infrastructure
2. Access, Services, and Programs
3. Timely Resolution/Efficient Operations
4. Community Relations and Collaboration with Partners
5. Employee Development and Innovative Work Culture
Lessons Learned

- The culture needs to support and sustain the plan
- Be willing to invest the necessary time
- Make it real
- Set attainable goals
- Bring in an experienced outside facilitator to jumpstart the process
- Explicitly link projects and practices to the mission statement
- Look at the big picture
Thanks for your Attention!

• Questions?
• Contact Information
  – Brian Ostrom – bostrom@ncsc.org
  – Kevin J. Bowling – kbowling@miottawa.org
  – Sandi Metcalf – smetcalf@miottawa.org

• Web resources
  – High Performance Court Framework
  – Strategic Plan Documents